

## Uniting Small Producers to Serve a Unique Consumer

**Location of Project:** Holyoke, Colorado (Western Region)

**Purpose:** The project's goal was to explore direct marketing opportunities with an urban community. The potential partners selected were the members of a 1,200 member parish in Denver, CO. The direct marketing project was seen as a means to both build a bond between urban and rural residents, and meet some of the fresh food needs of the parishioners.

**Accomplishments:** The pastor wrote a letter to his parishioners expressing his support of the direct marketing project and encouraging them to participate in a survey, which asked about their family's food purchasing needs. Of the 1,254 surveys mailed, 170 were returned; 34 survey respondents had children 12 years and older and 69 survey respondents had children younger than 12. Of the completed responses:

- Ninety respondents (53 percent) wanted to purchase naturally produced meat,

- Eighty respondents (47 percent) wanted fresh, naturally grown vegetables but did not wish to purchase meat,
- Eighty respondents (47 percent) wanted to visit the farm(s) where the food was produced, even though this would require traveling between 100 to 200 miles,
- Seventy-nine respondents (46 percent) out of 170 families owned storage freezers,
- Fifty-two respondents (31 percent) indicated a desire to be kept informed of the project's progress, and
- Thirty-nine respondents (23 percent) expressed their support of local agriculture.

**Lessons Learned:** The project yielded some evidence that the cost of food was not necessarily the most important element in families' food purchases. Survey results suggested that consumers based their food purchasing decisions on such considerations as *freshness, quality, price, convenience, and naturally or organically-produced.*

The price of food was not an overwhelmingly critical factor in food choices, with the exception of the cost of white bread.

**Conclusion:**

The survey demonstrated that household consumers place importance on the source of their food, and suggested that the potential exists to build new direct marketing alliances between urban and rural communities.